

## Working With Primary Sources

*This is a guide to help you navigate the world of finding, reading, and using primary sources! With this guide in hand, you will be able to really augment and enhance your research papers all through your academic career. Yippee.*

### 1. **Finding Primary Sources**

#### a. Using Key Words!

- Key words are the essential words that describe your thesis or your topic. For example, if you are studying *women in Rome*, an easy key word would be *women*.
- Often, you will need to use a number of key words that relate to your topic or thesis to find more than one primary source.

*For example: If you are studying gladiators, here are some key words you might use:*

-Gladiator	-Roman games	-Roman sports
-Combat	-Romani Ludi	-Entertainment in Rome
-Colosseum	-Slave	-Violence/warfare

- Using multiple key words will help you find information in unlikely places!

#### b. Looking in books

- There are two great places to look in any book, whether primary source or other, that will guide you to the information you need.

***I couldn't fit an image on this part of the packet, so instead, here is a pug with a cake hat.***



- **The first place to look is the *contents*.** The *contents* is at the very beginning of a book, and it will always tell you the titles of every chapter/section, or the subject matter of every chapter/section in the book. They will also usually give you page numbers for each section.

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- **The second place to look is the *index*.** The *index* is at the very end of a book, and it will list for you *key words*, with page numbers and section numbers right beside it!

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*Always remember that books are not daunting! They have tons of information, but you can always use the index or the glossary to find exactly what you need without reading the whole book!*

## **2. Reading Primary Sources**

### **a. Use your dictionary!**

- Translating from Latin to English has been done by many people over the course of nearly 1000 years. Sometimes, the translations are wordy and full of strange vocabulary. Use your dictionary frequently, so that you can understand what is actually going on!

### **b. Use Wikipedia!**

- There will be lots of information in primary sources—a lot of that information you may not know. Look up any terms, names, places, *etc.* that you don't know, and it will help you *immensely* to understand what's going on.

## **3. Using Primary Sources**

### **a. Essential questions to ask yourself**

- Some primary sources will be very helpful for your paper. Some sources will not be useful at all. To guide yourself, you should ask yourself these three questions for every primary source:
  1. *Does this primary source help support my argument in my thesis statement or topic?*
  2. *Does this primary source relate directly to my topic or thesis statement?*
  3. *Do I need this primary source? Why do I need it?*

### **b. Keeping track of your quotes**

- Once you have found a primary source quote that you want to use, you must do the following on a piece of paper:
  1. *Write down the title and author of the book you found the quote in.*
  2. *Write down the page number on which you found your quote.*
  3. *Write down the quote itself!*